Princeton University
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The Global Collaborative Networks Fund

RACE AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE AMERICAS
A Study of Racial Debates and Socio-Economic Mobility in Brazil
with Comparisons to the Caribbean and the United States

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1. Project Outline

Brazil’s importance as a key actor in the global political economy is continuously increasing; recently it was announced that Brazil has overtaken the United Kingdom as the world’s sixth largest economy. With a stable democracy, accelerated development and historically low unemployment rates, Brazil is also becoming a crucial endpoint of new migratory flows in the Americas. As unpredictable, emerging trends in global political economies give form to complex social realities, Brazil’s unique historical racial experiences and recent policy innovations serve as a cultural beacon and critical yet unexplored space of international dialogue. We propose a collaborative network to study the interface of race, citizenship and social mobility through a comparative perspective that will bring together Princeton and Brazilian scholars from a variety of intellectual traditions and diverse disciplinary perspectives.

This research network will follow multiple interlinking lines of inquiry in a historically deep and geographically broad manner: (1) the social significance of Brazilian critical race debates and their portability between Brazil, the Caribbean, and the United States; (2) how ideas of race, citizenship, and progress have historically migrated to Brazil and which notions of human rights and social justice inform contemporary race-based activism and jurisprudence; and (3) minor race theories (or everyday racial theorizing) in relation to social and economic mobility in Brazil today in a comparative perspective. Through individual and collective research and dialogue, we hope to simultaneously bring a critical perspective to these intellectual debates and concrete struggles and elevate their visibility in global forums where they are extremely relevant. We aim to produce fresh perspectives on Brazilian society and politics and to address critical intellectual, ethical and policy questions regarding race and citizenship in the Americas.

This network will strengthen and broaden Princeton’s academic and institutional ties with Brazil, specifically the University of São Paulo (USP), Latin America’s top-ranked university. Existing Princeton endeavors already recognize the significant place Brazil occupies in the contemporary world, and the University has made initial steps towards forging crucial
partnerships with Brazil. These include: (1) a Princeton language summer program in Brazil beginning in 2012; (2) Princeton’s Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS) Global Seminars for undergraduates taught in Brazil every summer beginning in 2012; (3) the appointment of anthropologist and historian Lilia Moritz Schwarcz from the University of São Paulo as a Princeton Global Scholar; (4) a proposed Brazilian Studies Certificate in the Program in Latin American Studies (PLAS) beginning in the 2012-13 academic year; and (5) a growing number of graduate and undergraduate students are currently doing research on and in Brazil, across all disciplines.

Our proposal also builds on longstanding exchanges. First, conversations with Schwarcz in spring 2010 when she was a visiting fellow in PLAS made clear the importance of a more stable inter-institutional bridge between Princeton and Brazilian centers of academic excellence. Such connections are also crucial to enabling the continuing circulation and training of our undergraduate and graduate students. Second, previous projects on racial inequality and affirmative action organized by Katherine Newman (then director of PIIRS) in conjunction with Guimarães, a visiting faculty member in the Center for African American Studies (CAAS) and PLAS during the academic year 2007-08, suggested the centrality of racial debates for the discussion of inequality in post-slavery societies like Brazil and the United States. Guimarães himself, together with sociologist Nadya Castro Guimarães, has also hosted several of Princeton students at USP. We now propose to increase the number of scholars in this exciting, interdisciplinary, and topical community of scholars in the making.

Finally, this project also builds on the success of a recent colloquium on slavery and its afterlives (in the spirit of the pioneering work of Stanley J. Stein, Professor Emeritus in the History Department). Organized by Princeton’s Pedro Meira Monteiro and by Lilia Moritz Schwarcz and Antonio Sérgio Guimarães, leading Brazilian academics and public intellectuals, the colloquium was held in partnership with USP. The colloquium took place in São Paulo in Spring 2011 and was also attended by Princeton’s Edward Telles, Tera Hunter, Bruno Carvalho and Arcadio Díaz-Quiñones, as well as several scholars from USP and other major Brazilian universities, reaching a wide academic and non-academic audience.
Pedro Meira Monteiro (Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures) and João Biehl (Anthropology)—who have consistently worked to expand Princeton ties with Brazil in the last decade—will be the network’s principal investigators, while Schwarcz and Guimarães will be our principal partners at USP. The network will be hosted by Princeton’s Program in Latin American Studies and will involve faculty and graduate students from Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures, Anthropology, History, Sociology, Politics, English, French and Italian, and the Center for African American Studies. We consider Telles (Sociology), Hunter (History and Center for African American Studies), and Carvalho (Spanish and Portuguese) as the adjunct faculty for this network. And Díaz-Quiñones (Spanish and Portuguese) is instrumental for expanding the dialogue to Caribbeanists. There is great complementarity of scholars on both sides of this network and much excitement about the prospects of sustaining the cross-border dialogue about race, African diasporas, and what some call “multicultural” citizenship.

In his comparative literature scholarship, Meira Monteiro explores the history of Brazil’s social and racial matrix, demonstrating how it challenges the global prominence of U.S. civilizational patterns, and revealing the place of race at the center of discussions of national and regional identities in Brazil and Latin America. Biehl’s historical work is concerned with how European immigration to southern Brazil in the 19th century has changed ideas of whiteness, labor, and political belonging and his medical anthropological research is concerned with treatment access and networks of care among the Brazilian urban poor. Schwarcz’s historical and anthropological scholarship focuses on race, science and rights in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery in Brazil (1888), as well as on the status of modern and contemporary Afro-Brazilian populations. In his sociological work, Guimarães explores Brazil’s postwar racial debates and current trends of racial classification in Brazil and in the United States, as well as the history of ideas about race in Brazil and the Caribbean. Questions of race and citizenship thus cross-cut in complementary and overlapping ways the work of the four scholars who will lead the research network’s core activities.

Global Collaborative Network funds will be used for research and to organize yearly major conferences and small workshops at Princeton and USP, involving faculty and students from both sides. The first year (2012-13), coordinated by Meira Monteiro at Princeton and by
Schwarcz and Guimarães at USP, will be dedicated to a thorough historical study of the debate about race and an examination of the public debate on race today. Initial work will connect national and diverse regional perspectives that are normally studied in isolation and will open the discussion to realities that go beyond the black/white binary that typically circumscribes racial dialogue in Brazil and elsewhere. The principal activities during this first year will be: an introductory conference in Fall 2012 that will bring a group of Brazilian scholars to meet with colleagues at Princeton and discuss a critical framework for the study of the racial debate in Brazil in comparison to the United States and the Caribbean; a series of workshops involving faculty and graduate students in both São Paulo and Princeton in spring and summer 2013; and the creation of a website to facilitate collective discussion and the dissemination of findings.

The second year (2013-2014), coordinated by Biehl at Princeton and by Schwarcz and Guimarães at USP, will be dedicated to the intersections of race, science and the law from the historical perspective of macro processes of migration, including slavery and the arrival of European immigrants in the Americas in the 19th and 20th centuries. Building on the work of the first year, this comparative framework will be brought to bear on historical questions such as social exclusion emerging from eugenics discourses, as well as social mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion seen in the worlds of religion, labor, and health (always attending to Brazil’s striking regional differences). Planned activities include a workshop in which working papers from Princeton and USP faculty and advanced graduate students will be previously circulated and intensely discussed. The workshop will take place in Fall 2013 in Princeton and will be followed by a lecture series at USP in Spring 2014. In this lecture series, Princeton faculty participants will disseminate key findings to a broader academic audience in Brazil. Biehl and Schwarcz are also considering co-teaching an advanced undergraduate course at Princeton (also open to graduate students) on the anthropology of contemporary Brazil.

The network’s third year (2014-2015) will be coordinated jointly by Meira Monteiro and Biehl alongside partners at USP and documentary filmmaker and journalist João Moreira Salles (Princeton Council of Humanities and Spanish and Portuguese Visiting Professor in 2011). We will then bring our critical discussions to bear on the re-articulation of race vis-à-vis Brazil’s fast-paced economy, new labor and migration patterns, and growing political power on the global
scene. Participants will pay particular attention to the recasting of race in religion and in the media, visual arts and literature and explore the construction of narratives relating the macro processes of emerging economies with the daily lives of historically marginalized populations. During this year, we will finalize book chapters, articles and an edited volume and also discuss the future of the network. New partnerships and possible new projects will be explored at a conference at USP, involving all of the members of the network from Princeton. The network’s third year of activities will conclude with a two-day workshop at Princeton involving graduate students from both institutions who have distinguished themselves over the three years. In this way, we look forward to the opportunity to train new researchers with a critical and nuanced global perspective, attentive to regional variations in racial debates and to challenges of persistent inequalities and social justice.

It will also be important to sustain the flow of graduate students both ways. Several students from Spanish and Portuguese, History, and Anthropology have been at USP before—and are planning extended sojourns there in the future. We would also like to include USP graduate students as Visiting Student Research Collaborators (VSRC’s) in Princeton. We have already identified several potential candidates. We would like to involve graduate students from several departments and programs and, in particular, students affiliated with the Center for African American Studies, who work on the United States, to join the network and thus offer them all opportunities to be part of a transnational conversation—and hear the voices of Brazilians and Brazilianists.

2. Core Themes, Participants, and Contributions of the Research Network

It is often noted that the United States and Brazil differ in the sense that Brazil does not have a history of racial discrimination based on a “one-drop” rule. Yet the lack of this kind of segregationist matrix, where any degree of black ancestry constitutes black identity, does not imply the absence of racism. This project will take as a critical point of departure the controversial idea of a “racial democracy” in Brazil. Emerging in the early twentieth century, this set of intellectual discourses (informed by the work of anthropologist and sociologist
Gilberto Freyre imagines a malleable society where racial tensions and disjoint racial discourses would have been attenuated due to a history built out of compromise and approximation. The idea of racial democracy left a profound mark on the ways race and color are conceptualized and ultimately experienced in Brazil. Especially after World War II, it fed a Brazilian fantasy of global importance, paving the way for a vision of Brazilian society as one in which race was supposedly unimportant, or at least less important than in other places.

The racial debate in Brazil today could be conceived as strained between two poles: first, the idea that affirmative action represents a foreign U.S. imported paradigm that does not adequately mesh with the historical experience of miscegenation in Brazil; and second, the idea that affirmative action could serve to correct contemporary inequalities that are merely concealed by an ideological commitment to racial democracy. The existence of racism today in Brazil unravels the narrative of a pure or utopian racial democracy. However, even if it is problematic, “miscegenation” remains a fundamental term of Brazilian racial discourse today; it has become an unavoidable part of speaking about race in Brazil.

Miscegenation is the product of a particular social and historical context. In Brazil, the idea of a racially mixed nation crystallized into an ideology during the 1930’s government of Getúlio Vargas, which shaped the master narratives about Brazilian national identity still valid today. This involved the consolidation of the myth of the *mulato*, conceived as essentially mixed. In fact, the racial debate in Brazil today suffers from a certain “mulatocentrism.” It is necessary to destabilize this paradigm in order to highlight what is concealed by its fixation on the mixing of black and white: the immigrant, and all those Others who remain outside the myth of the Brazilian racial encounter. This is one of the key lines of inquiry for the presently proposed network: how to expand the limits of the debate about miscegenation in Brazil from the point of view of multiple racial and ethnic experiences? What specific political and historical forces shaped the terms of this discourse? Who is excluded by master narratives of race in Brazil? What role does Africa play, in a historical and contemporary perspective, in the formation of national and regional identities in the Americas? And how might a closer attention to the lived realities of diverse racial and ethnic communities serve as a form of alternate
critical theorizing about race, simultaneously broadening our analytics and our sense of what is socially possible and desirable?

A second objective of this network is to explore and interrogate the crucial jurisprudential space between these two poles, recognizing that the public apprehends these markers of racial discourse in multiple, disjoint ways in its quotidian relationship with the state and the law. Legislation and jurisprudence are spaces where debates about miscegenation are both formulated and attain concrete meaning. The law can serve as a critical site where intellectual discourses on race are critiqued from the critical perspective of diverse lived racial experiences.

The discussion about affirmative action has arrived in Brazil only recently. It is often seen as an ill-fitting import of a North American legal paradigm, and many in Brazil believe that the discourse of affirmative action itself is productive of a certain kind of racism. Yet others argue that the most urgent task is to acknowledge the real legacy of slavery, which persists today in the racism and social inequality that exists as a daily fact of life. Even within the terms of a discourse of racial democracy, fundamental questions remain: who is black, and who is white, in Brazilian history? And what does one make of those who are neither?

The law constitutes a focal point for historians, social scientists, and cultural critics, both as an official discourse and as a social construct that is manipulated and experienced in everyday life. Jurisprudence can serve as point of mediation between the official discourse about race and the quotidian experiences and practices of life that can re-signify the law itself, pointing to its limits. Without this attention to the lived realities of race and racial law, it is impossible to understand the diverse possibilities of racial subjectivity in a society that has often presented itself as a multicultural paradise. Attention to social and legal racial regimes thus offers a means of interrogating the paradisiacal myth of the bloodless conviviality of different races and colors. How does this myth inform legal discourses and how can an attention to lived experiences of the law recover what is obscured by such a narrative? This myth, at the core of the concept of racial democracy, has indeed been translated into a set of mental and discursive tools that help intellectuals and social actors think of themselves, the
community, and the country, and as such it offers a critical site for such discussion and intervention.

Why is the debate about Brazil important in the United States? A comparative perspective unsettles national exceptionalisms, and points to productive junctures where each debate can illuminate the other. From a Brazilian perspective, the United States occupies an important position in the debate about race, functioning as a complex mirror. It can reflect possible paths for racial thought in Brazil (such as in the case of affirmative action, which only began to be implanted in Brazil several decades after its emergence in North America), and it can also point to irreducible differences. By proposing a comparative perspective that would bring the Brazilian debate about the racial question into focus, with all its unique premises and problematics, we will approach the Brazilian question not merely as an exotic case study. Rather, it becomes a historical example that can also illuminate the North American experience, interrogating the limits of North American intellectual discourses, in a dialogue with scholars of diverse disciplines—from African American and Afro Brazilian studies to social sciences, from cultural criticism to literary studies. Although the principal focus of this project will be Brazil, a comparative perspective will counterbalance the problematic and self-referential nature of the Brazilian debate.

The network will gather fresh ideas to the debate on race in Brazil and beyond from Tera Hunter (History and Center for African American Studies), whose work on slavery and marriage legislation in the 19th century in the U.S. raises critical questions regarding family strategies and slavery in a comparative perspective; from Edward Telles (Sociology), whose work has broadened existing sociological paradigms for understanding race and inequality and has significantly impacted racial debate and policy in Brazil and the U.S.; from Bruno Carvalho (Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures), whose work on the “porosity” of the urban experience in Rio de Janeiro, as well as his study of key historical figures in Brazil and the United States who dealt with race and marriage, explores the fluid frontiers that separate both countries; from Mariana Candido (History), who has worked on the slave trade in Benguela in ways that bring an important, new look at the transatlantic history of perceptions of color and race in colonial times; from Evan Lieberman (Politics), whose work in the field of comparative
politics has focused on how race and ethnicity shape policy, with a focus on Brazil and South Africa.

The interdisciplinary engagements made possible by the work of such scholars across Princeton bring exciting and important perspectives to ongoing debates on race in Brazil and beyond, creating space for new intellectual and critical questions about citizenship in transformation. Drawing from such ground-breaking work, the network will make possible a robust intervention into the Brazilian debate on race and citizenship from the perspective of new critical discourses generated at Princeton at the same time as it brings the debate to Princeton.

Finally, there is a third, indispensable point of departure for this comparative study of racial politics: the Caribbean. Though the societies of the Caribbean are vast and plural, from both a cultural and linguistic point of view, theorizations of race, citizenship, and social mobility in the Caribbean offer an important point of comparison for our research network. To situate our interconnected research within a broader regional and theoretical comparative perspective, we aim to take advantage of the rich tradition of Caribbean studies at Princeton. Characterized by the works of Arcadio Díaz-Quiñones (Professor Emeritus in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures) and Leon-François Hoffmann (Professor Emeritus in the Department of French and Italian), Caribbean Studies at Princeton have been marked by attention to the region’s multiple histories and languages, as well as attention to the distinct beginnings and principles of racial and national discourses in the region. This tradition continues today in the work of scholars such as Nick Nesbitt (French and Italian), whose research on the Haitian Revolution contributes to a nuanced understanding of the history of black resistance in the region; of Rachel Price (Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures) through her work on media and literature in contemporary Cuba, as well as affect and slavery in the Caribbean; and of Alexandra Vazquez (Department of English and the Center for African American Studies), whose research on U.S. Latinos and on the cultures of the African diaspora also draws from her expertise on Hispanic Caribbean music. By including these scholars in our network and in the formulation of our project goals, we aim to develop a less “nationalized” and more rigorously comparative perspective on race.
Indeed, one way in which the Caribbean enters into this comparative perspective is as a vast zone in which the question of porosity is central; that is, a group of societies in which the lines of color are eminently fluid. Such societies reignite debates about national identity, at the same time that they put the ideology of miscegenation to the test, making visible the historical function of racism in communities that are not marked by the North American pattern of segregation. Moreover, scholars in Brazil read little of the Caribbean case, and vice-versa. The North American academy, and Princeton in particular, can be a locus of change in this regard. This network will make it possible to question anew the absolute irreducibility of the Brazilian case, destabilizing the notion that only Brazilians are authorized to opine about the complexity of their history, above all when it refers to the problem of race.

Having Brazil, the Caribbean and the United States as our main references, we are then submitting a major project to tackle the following questions: Is it possible to understand more porous societies like those of Brazil and the Caribbean, without the help of the North American historical reference, which obviously brings into light real and profound limitations to the crossing of racial lines? To what extent is it possible to sustain the idea of a Caribbean/Brazilian porosity (as suggested above)? Is it still valid to consider both the Caribbean and Brazil as “laboratories” for the racial debate, as was clearly the case in certain moments in the 20th century, especially in the aftermath of the World War II? How far are we from the time when certain regions of the Southern hemisphere seemed to hold the keys for solving some of the problems of the developed world regarding racial conflicts? (As, for instance, Brazil’s “racial democracy” was a crucial motivator of European and North American interest in the history of Brazil, often seen as a “less racialized” society.) How can we make local experiences on race comparable with similar experiences in other places or in transnational and translocal context? Is it possible and desirable to avoid the two-term comparison (Brazil-US, Caribbean-US, Caribbean-Brazil), and how might the inclusion of a third angle (Brazil-Caribbean-U.S.) challenge and open up such comparisons? Also, how to address the internal differences within these three regions and thus avoid universalizing assumptions with regard to the everyday working and experiences of race, colors, and racism? Finally, how can we escape the nationalistic view that implies that “mixed” societies are irreducible local experiences? What happens when the
critique of the concept/ideology of “racial democracy” meets the reevaluation of more open experiences? How can we discuss affirmative action initiatives in societies that have never had Jim Crow laws? What can these Brazilian issues bring to the debate on race in the various regions of the Caribbean and the United States? And what can the debates in those areas bring to the Brazilian case?

On the Brazilian side of this network, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz and Antonio Sérgio Guimarães, as noted above, will be our principal partners at USP. In addition to the connections that Schwarcz and Guimarães offer with the departments of Anthropology and Sociology, we also anticipate network linkages with additional USP departments, including Philosophy, Literature, and the Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros (Brazilian Studies Center). Moreover, although Brazilian participation in the research network will primarily concentrate on USP, the strong interconnections fostered by Schwarcz and Guimarães, and their own participation in local and international networks, will facilitate connections with a larger web of researchers beyond this single institution. Other Brazilian scholars who would be participating in this network are Angela Alonso (Sociology, USP), Laura Moutinho (Anthropology, USP), Martha Abreu (History, UFF), André Botelho (Sociology, UFRJ), Silvia Hunold Lara (History, Unicamp), Omar Thomaz (Anthropology, Unicamp), Wlamyra Alburquerque (History, UFBA), Nadya Guimarães (Sociology, USP), Sidney Chalhoub (History, Unicamp), Walter Garcia (Brazilian Studies, USP), Walter Fraga Filho (History, UFRB), Vagner Silva (Anthropology, USP), Marcelo Paixão (UFRJ), and Marcia Lima (Sociology, USP).

3. Network’s Activities and List of Princeton Faculty

The network’s main activities will involve faculty research and three large conferences (two hosted in Princeton and one in São Paulo) and a series of small workshops on both sides, involving faculty and graduate students. We will host graduate students from São Paulo throughout the three-year period of the network and will send our own students to spend short periods at USP where they will be mentored by our colleagues there.

2012-13

⇒ Two-day initial conference on Brazilian race debates and their portability between Brazil, the Caribbean, and the United States. Hosted by Princeton in fall 2012, it will bring eight major scholars from Brazil who will be part of the network. At that point, we will
collectively plan for the exchange of graduate students and the circulation of faculty.

⇒ Establishment of the website that will contain the main results of conferences and workshops (non-published essays, links and a forum—probably a blog—where information on our activities will be available, as well as being a space for collective reflection). This site will be administered by a team of graduate students from both sides of the research network.

⇒ Three one-day workshops at Princeton, in which our faculty and students will be invited to read a previously circulated text and discuss the scholarship of a Brazilian colleague. Our Brazilian partners Lilia Schwarcz and Antonio Sergio Guimarães along with André Botelho (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro) will start this workshop series. They will lead the discussion with a Princeton faculty serving as a respondent. Our Brazilian colleagues will be invited to spend a whole week on campus, in order to meet with faculty and students.

⇒ Three one-day workshops at USP, in which Princeton faculty will lead the discussion and have a USP commentator. It would involve faculty and students in São Paulo. The same arrangement as above will be made, and the Princeton faculty member will spend a whole week abroad in order to fully explore the network in its Brazilian site.

2013-14

⇒ Two-day conference on race and socio-economic mobility in the Americas both in historical and contemporary comparative perspective. The conference will be hosted by Princeton in fall 2013 and will bring to campus eight Brazilian scholars. Research working papers will be previously circulated and discussed with the objective of producing an edited book.

⇒ Three-day exploratory seminar on race, migration, and health with a group of twelve faculty and graduate students involved in the network (with an ethnographic focus on refugee and labor migratory flows from the Caribbean, the Andean Region, and Portuguese-speaking Africa to Brazil). The seminar will take place at Princeton in spring 2014. Brazilian participants will also participate on academic events on campus.

⇒ A lecture series at USP in Spring 2014. Princeton faculty will be presenting work-in-progress and engaging the Brazilian academy.

⇒ Biehl and Schwarcz will be planning and teaching an advanced undergraduate course (open to graduate students) on the anthropology of contemporary Brazil.
2014-15

⇒ Three-day final conference at USP in the spring of 2015, focusing on everyday racial theorizing vis-à-vis social mobility in a comparative perspective. All Princeton faculty who have participated in the network will be invited to attend the conference. We will assess results and discuss possible future partnerships, as well as publications (most likely a special issue of a journal and one or two collective volumes based on the achievements of the network).

⇒ Two-day workshop at Princeton in the fall of 2014, bringing together USP and Princeton graduate students who will have participated in the network. Students will present and discuss their achievements throughout the three years, and faculty members will be the discussants.

⇒ Two one-day workshops, one at USP with a Princeton faculty member and one at Princeton with Brazilian acclaimed filmmaker and former Council of the Humanities Visiting Scholar Joao Moreira Salles, on contemporary portrayals of race in documentary film.

List of Princeton Faculty Participants (in alphabetical order):

João Biehl, Susan Dod Brown Professor of Anthropology and Woodrow Wilson School Faculty Associate; Co-Director of the Program in Global Health and Health Policy

Mariana Candido, Assistant Professor of History

Bruno Carvalho, Assistant Professor of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures

Arcadio Díaz-Quiñones, Emory L. Ford Professor of Spanish; Professor of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures, Emeritus

Tera Hunter, Professor of History and the Center for African American Studies

Evan S. Lieberman, Associate Professor of Politics; Associate Chair, Department of Politics

Pedro Meira Monteiro, Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures and French and Italian Faculty Associate

F. Nick Nesbitt, Professor of French and Italian; Associate Chair, Department of French and Italian

Rachel Price, Assistant Professor of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Cultures

Edward E. Telles, Professor of Sociology

Alexandra Vazquez, Assistant Professor of English and African American Studies